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Amanda Freund
Freund's Farm
CowPots

John Guskowski
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Eric Hammerling
CT Forest & Park Association

Terry Jones
Jones Family Farms

Kip Kolesinskas
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Amy Paterson
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Working Lands Alliance Policy Statement HB 5037 Appropriation Committee Public Hearing February 16, 2022

Dear Co-Chairs Osten and Walker; Vice-Chairs Hartley, Dathan, and Nolan;
Ranking Members Miner and France, and members of the Appropriations
Committee:

The Working Lands Alliance appreciates the opportunity to testify **with conditional support** for HB 5037 – An Act Adjusting the State Budget for the Biennium Ending June 30, 2023.

My name is Chelsea Gazillo, and I am American Farmland Trust's New England Policy Director. I also lead the CT Working Lands Alliance (WLA), a broad-based, statewide coalition dedicated to preserving Connecticut's farmland. WLA includes farmers and such organizations as CT Farmland Trust, CT Forest and Park Association, New CT Farmer Alliance, City of New Haven Food Policy Division, CT Land Conservation Council, and the CT Farm Bureau Association, among many others. As an Alliance, we care deeply about saving Connecticut's farmland and ensuring a healthy agricultural sector and a prosperous future for Connecticut's farmers.

WLA was pleased to see the Governor has continued to fund and invest in the Department of Agriculture. A stand-alone Department of Agriculture remains one of the Working Lands Alliance's top priorities. The Department is a crucial component to continuing a strong and diverse agricultural sector, providing regulatory oversight, and guidance to farmers and agricultural service providers. The agency's consistent funding reinforces the administration and state's commitment to Connecticut's agricultural sector.

We are generally supportive of Governor Lamont's proposed FY 2023 budget amendments. However, we strongly recommend that the state prioritize funding for climate-change mitigation, adaptation, and resiliency.

In 2020, many of our WLA Steering Committee members were proud to participate in Working and Natural Lands Sub-Committees that were a part of the Governor's Council on Climate Change (GC3). As outlined in the [GC Phase 1 Report](#) and [Governor Lamont's Executive Order 21-3](#), our working and natural lands are vital in the state's efforts to mitigate the impacts of climate change. In this legislative session, Connecticut has an opportunity to make FY 2023 budget adjustments or use American Rescue Act Plan dollars to invest in climate change mitigation and to support farmers in advancing a resilient food system for all Connecticut residents.



WLA urges that the legislature prioritize support for farmers and landowners to increase climate-smart agriculture and forestry practices as defined by the United States Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service.

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We look forward to exploring this opportunity with you as the 2022 legislative session progresses. Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Governor's budget amendments. Please feel free to reach out to me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Chelsea Gazillo
Working Lands Alliance
American Farmland Trust